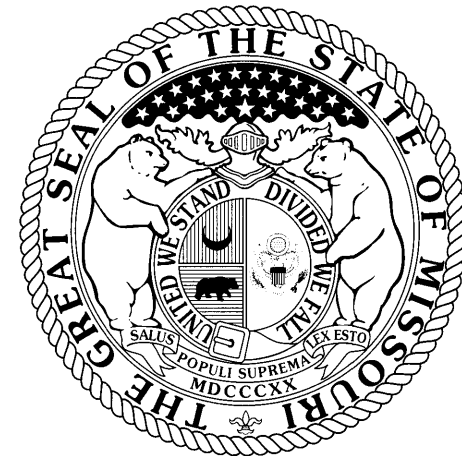


Missouri

STATE *of the* STATE

ADDRESS



January 20, 2016

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor



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Governor Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon

State of the State Address

Thank you, Lt. Gov. Kinder, Speaker Richardson, President Pro Tem Richard, members of the General Assembly, Judges of the Missouri Supreme Court, state officials, members of my cabinet and honored guests.

I'm also delighted to be joined this evening by Missouri's First Lady – my wonderful wife, Georganne, and our sons Jeremiah and Will.

Thirty-two years ago, I was a young Jefferson County lawyer beginning a campaign for the state Senate, asking people to believe in my passion, my work ethic and my vision.

The people of my home county gave me their votes and an opportunity for a life in public service that has brought me to this moment.

The world is a very different place than it was in 1984. But as people, our hopes, dreams and fears haven't changed.

And politics at its core isn't different at all. It is still a great contest of ideas and how to put them into action.

So tonight I want to highlight some of the real progress – and outline the perils of inaction – on the critical issues that face us now.

Growing up in DeSoto, I went to Central Elementary School. Back then, students with challenges were warehoused in a separate building. At recess, they were the targets of jeers.

I remember at a young age understanding that this was wrong, and trying my best to do something about it. That experience taught me some fundamental lessons that have stayed with me ever since.



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We aren't all given the same gifts, but we all have the same rights. And our service will ultimately be measured at Heaven's doorstep by what we did – or did not do – to help those in need.

Seven years ago I stood right here and talked about our shared values as Missourians.

Those values haven't changed. Values don't.

And the goals of progress, based on those values, haven't changed either.

Tonight – my final time at this podium speaking to Missouri, to you in this room, and to history – I will be clear about my vision for a shared path forward... and the steps we can take to grow our economy, improve our schools, care for those in need and earn the trust of the people we serve.

And I pledge to you that I will do everything I can, with the power entrusted in me, to move us – to move you – to action.

Action carries risks. But it's the risk-takers who make history.

Inaction is always easier. But inaction is also a decision with real consequences. So tonight I ask all Missourians – and especially those in this room – to join with me.

Choose action over inaction to make life better for the people of our state.

Don't fight for partisan reasons – yours or mine. Instead, let's join together to fight for progress.



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In my first state of the state address in 2009, I set five broad goals for our state based on values we share as Missourians. And on four of these five goals, we've taken huge strides.

My first priority was jobs... and since the worst of the downturn, more than 100,000 new jobs have been created in Missouri.

Second, as Chief Executive, I pledged to take the actions necessary to balance the state budget every year without raising taxes, because we believe in fiscal responsibility. We did so for seven straight years, and will continue on that path under my budget.

My third goal was to make college better and more affordable, because education is the key to our future. Today, Missouri is number one in the country for keeping a lid on tuition increases, and under my budget we'll stay number one this year.

My fourth goal was to provide more Missourians with better health care. Today, 100,000 more children have health care than the day I took office.

And this year, we'll make historic investments to help Missourians with developmental disabilities and mental illness live with dignity and hope.

The fifth goal I set was ethics reform. Let's get real ethics reform on my desk this session so I can sign it into law.

Honest, transparent and accountable state government starts with remembering what we're here to do, and who we're here to serve:



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People like Sarah Galbraith and Alan Doan. Eight years ago, they took a risk and started the Missouri Star Quilt Company in the small town of Hamilton. Now it's the largest employer in Caldwell County – and brings thousands of visitors to Hamilton each year.

People like Rebecca Balfanz – a mother who grew up in foster care and who is now on track to finish her degree in elementary education early from WGU-Missouri, to make life better for her kids.

And people like Kelsey Mack. Kelsey has cerebral palsy, but she didn't let it stop her dream. She opened a shop in Blue Springs selling items made exclusively by people with disabilities, to help them be more independent and empowered.

Like so many Missourians, these folks didn't fold in the face of a challenge. They persevered. Because that's what the people of Missouri do.

Just a few short weeks ago, floodwaters inundated many parts of the state, claiming 16 lives and threatening hundreds more. And as always, Missourians stood together, and reached out to help their neighbors in need.

Let me share one remarkable story with you.

On Dec. 27, just after 2 a.m., a call went out to the Missouri State Highway Patrol about a man who had been swept away by the floodwaters of the Pomme de Terre River in Polk County.

Corporal David Brown and Trooper Robert Garrett sprang into action. As they neared the Highway 215 Bridge, they could hear someone shouting for help, but it was far too dark to see on that cold night.



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In spite of the danger, they launched a jet boat into the raging river. As Trooper Garrett steered through the treacherous currents, their spotlight hit the face of a young man desperately clinging to the branches of a tree ten feet above the water's surface.

As the man began to climb down to his rescuers, he slipped and fell into the freezing river. Before the swift current could pull him under, Corporal Brown hauled him into the boat and got him safely to dry land.

Their training paid off: a life was saved.

The willingness to risk their lives for others is a defining characteristic of all those who answer the call to service – as first responders, law enforcement officers and members of the military. They run toward danger, not away from it.

Corporal Brown and Trooper Garrett, please stand. You represent all those who serve our state and our nation with honor. Please accept the thanks of your state.

As Governor, I've seen many natural disasters – from floods and drought, to ice storms and tornadoes. We seem to get more than our fair share.

Maybe that's why Missourians have such grit... fortitude... and a relentless work ethic. No one works harder or competes tougher.

That's why job creation was the first goal I set back in 2009 – and why it continues to be my top priority moving forward. In '09, Missouri's unemployment rate spiked to nearly 10 percent; today, it's down to only 4.4 percent – 4.4 percent, that's lower than the national average, and the lowest it's been in 15 years.



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When I took office, the auto industry in Missouri was on life support. Today, it's back and booming, and Missouri is home to the most productive Ford plant in the world.

When I took office, a lot of talented entrepreneurs couldn't get access to the capital they needed.

Today, Missouri is number one in the nation in new business creation.

GDP is up, home prices have rebounded, and personal income continues to rise.

The state of our state is strong – and getting stronger each day. But we can't let up.

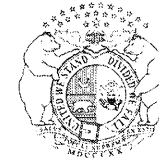
We need to keep our economy moving – keep our fiscal house in order, and keep our AAA credit rating intact.

The balanced budget I present tonight continues our commitment to my second goal: fiscal responsibility.

Over the last seven years, we've made state government smaller, smarter and more efficient – while making \$2 billion in cuts necessary to balance the budget. Not everyone liked those cuts, and they weren't easy to make. But Missouri is stronger today because we took action.

In an election year like this, there are folks out there who claim the size of government has grown, and that spending is out of control.

Maybe that's true in Washington. But not here in the Show-Me State.



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Here in Missouri we balance our budgets, we pay the bills, and we pay down debt.

In fact, when I leave office, we will have less debt than when I came in.

State government today is 5,087 positions smaller than when I took office, and under my budget it will keep getting smaller. 5,000 is about the size of my hometown of DeSoto, or all of Putnam County.

Balancing budgets. Paying our bills. Protecting our AAA credit rating.

Responsibility and accountability matter – that's what taxpayers expect and what they deserve.

Our AAA rating is the gold standard. It tells businesses around the globe that the Show-Me State is a smart place to invest. And it's a big selling point for our state.

Time and time again it has been a deal-closer for Missouri – unlike Illinois, which can't even pass a budget, or Kansas, which can't even pay its bills.

And both of those states had their credit ratings downgraded. Meanwhile, Missouri's economy keeps growing.

Last week I was back at the auto show in Detroit, where – once again – the spotlight was on the all-new vehicles built with pride here in Missouri.

Before I took office, auto plants were closing; one out of every three jobs in the automotive industry in Missouri had disappeared. And the first time I went up to the Auto Show, the mood was grim.



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Seven years later, more than 24,000 men and women are working at auto plants and suppliers in Warrensburg and Willow Springs; Perryville and Portageville; Mexico and Moberly; in Troy, Dexter, New Haven and, of course, St. Louis and Kansas City, where employment at the Ford and GM plants has more than doubled.

Today, Missouri workers build the toughest, safest, most innovative and in-demand vehicles in the world:

The Ford F-150 – America’s best-selling pickup truck: Made in Missouri.

The 2016 Truck of the Year, the Chevy Colorado: Made in Missouri.

The best-selling commercial van in the U.S., the Ford Transit: Made in Missouri.

American made – Missouri strong.

And by rebuilding the American auto industry, we’re helping rebuild the middle-class.

Last year every union worker at Ford and GM got a huge bonus: thousands of dollars, right into the pockets of the working men and women of our state. Those bonuses paid off credit cards and student loans... put Royals hats and Cardinals jerseys under the Christmas tree... and poured tens of millions of dollars into our economy.

Last year, if you’ll recall, we were joined by a crowd of cheering autoworkers who came to the Capitol to show their gratitude for the work we did here.



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They’re not here tonight – because they’re out working. Demand is so high they even had to give up lunch breaks at the GM plant.

So next time you see one of those shiny new Colorados or F-150s, remember who built them: skilled union workers, making good union wages, and keeping the American dream alive right here in the Show-Me State.

But the economic growth we’ve seen isn’t just in Kansas City and St. Louis, it’s in Sedalia and Springfield, St. Joe and Joplin.

Joplin...where the population is greater today than it was before the tornado in 2011, and where the economy is going strong.

With faith and courage, the people of Joplin rebuilt their community from the ground up – planting trees and painting murals; rebuilding homes and hospitals, schools and churches, playgrounds and businesses.

One of those new businesses belongs to Toby Teeter, an entrepreneur I met at Joplin’s Newman Innovation Center. About a year ago, Toby started a tech company called LocalRaces.com. It builds websites that communities and charities can use to organize running events, from 5ks to marathons.

Toby’s biggest challenge was finding the funds he needed to get his concept up and running. Our Missouri Technology Corporation provided \$100,000 in seed capital that Toby was able to match with private investments. Today, Local Races dot com is growing, and hiring – creating high-tech jobs in the heart of Joplin.

Please join me in recognizing Toby, his wife Ashleigh, and all the entrepreneurs who are helping to make Missouri a hub of technology and innovation.



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Thanks to the work we've done here, MTC has already helped startups across the state leverage more than \$200 million in private investment.

Maybe that's why recent census data showed that Missouri was number one in the nation in creating new businesses – number one.

While new business creation declined in 39 states, Missouri bucked that trend with a dramatic increase in startups. That's a very big deal.

To continue this momentum, my budget increases funding for the Missouri Technology Corporation by \$10 million to help more entrepreneurs innovate and grow right here in the Show-Me State.

Tourism is another important part of our economy.

That's why, when I took office, I wanted to reverse a 10-year decline in state park attendance. While budget cuts forced other states to close parks or charge entrance fees, we kept ours open – and free for all.

Missouri has been recognized as the best state in the nation for camping and hiking. Last year, our state parks had more than 19.2 million visitors. That's a new record and an increase of nearly 30 percent since 2008. More young people are out hunting in our woods and fishing in our lakes and streams.

With our focus on marketing Missouri to the world, tourism's economic impact in the Show-Me State has surged by nearly 30 percent, supporting nearly 300,000 jobs. To continue this success, my budget this year includes another \$3 million to get the word out about all Missouri has to offer.



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For example, this year, we will extend the Katy Trail all the way across our state and expand our park system, giving folks even more reasons to enjoy the outdoors, and spend money in the Show-Me State.

When we talk about ways to keep our economy moving forward, we've got to include Missouri's number one industry: agriculture.

My budget includes funding for scholarships for the next generation of Missouri dairy farmers, and additional resources to increase the value of our cattle industry.

I would like to recognize our outstanding Agriculture Director Richard Fordyce, up in the gallery. He's got a great group of folks with him tonight: the hardworking producers who earned the Governor's Award for Agricultural Achievement.

People talk about agriculture being the backbone of our state. Well, these folks are the backbone of agriculture.

When your alarm clock goes off in the morning, they're already up, breaking the ice in the stock tank.

When you're kicking back in the recliner after dinner to watch your favorite TV show, they're out in the shed, working on the tractor.

This year's winners hail from every part of our state – New Madrid to Norborne, Aurora to Fayette – raising corn, beans, apples, timber, chickens and hogs.

Please join me in thanking them for all they do to feed, fuel and clothe our state, our nation and our world.



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Our producers are doing their part. Now we have to do ours.

We can't sell Missouri goods if we can't get them to market.

That's why my budget invests an additional \$5 million to improve and expand our ports – so we can ship more Missouri goods around the world and create more jobs here at home.

We've also got too many bad roads and rickety bridges. We all know it, and it's time to act.

Roads aren't free. Last time I checked, nobody was giving away concrete and asphalt.

I've been clear about my position: if you use the roads, you should help pay for them. What I don't support is taking money that should go to schools, law enforcement and mental health, and using it to patch potholes.

With gas prices the lowest they've been in more than a decade, now is the time to get this done.

Senator Libla, I appreciate your leadership in this area. I'm looking for your bill to move into the passing lane and get to my desk this year. Let's work together to move transportation forward in Missouri.

Another way we can continue to strengthen our economy is by strengthening Missouri families. Finding good, affordable childcare is a challenge for every working family in America – and especially those with low incomes. That's why my budget makes child care more affordable for 20,000 low-income working families, reducing their out-of-pocket costs.



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And this year, we are going to expand family-friendly policies like parental leave for state employees.

It's good for kids, it's good for families – and it's good for our state.

We need to strengthen all families.

In July, I signed an executive order to ensure compliance with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision establishing a right to same-sex marriage. No one should be discriminated against because of who they love.

We've come a long way on this issue, but there is more to be done. It is unacceptable that Missourians can still be fired for being gay. That's wrong, it's not who we are – and it must change.

I repeat my call for the General Assembly to pass the Missouri Nondiscrimination Act, which would prohibit discrimination against LGBT Missourians in employment, housing and public accommodations.

Equal opportunity and social justice go hand-in-hand; one cannot exist without the other.

We are upholding these principles and restoring trust through sweeping municipal court reforms and improved police training.

Our POST Commission has put forward strong new rules to update and enhance Missouri's police training standards. We also need to update our use of force statute. Let's support our cops – and the communities they serve. Let's get this done.



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The third priority I identified when I took office was education. Public education is the best economic development tool we've got, and it's a value we share.

Our children need an education that prepares them to be critical thinkers and problem-solvers – innovators who will rise to the challenges of climate change and food production, harness clean energy, and conquer disease.

That's why, even during the worst of the recession, we never backed away from our commitment to support our public schools. We provided record funding – and set higher expectations.

There were some who doubted whether our students and schools were up to the challenge, who said the new state standards were too tough, too ambitious.

I disagreed. I knew that if we raised our expectations, our students would rise to meet them. No gimmicks or voucher schemes – just great teachers, the right tools, strong communities, and a shared commitment to excellence.

And we are getting results. Test scores are rising. Our graduation rate is now in the top 10 in the nation. And more high school graduates are college ready.

My budget ensures that education remains a top priority with an increase of \$150 million – record funding – for our local public schools.

That includes funding for the foundation formula, special education, transportation, and struggling school districts.

And for the first time, we'll be funding early childhood education through the foundation formula, giving more than 2,500 kids access to high quality pre-school this year.



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Under my budget, troubled schools will get the early-intervention and support they need to turn things around. And more students in low-income communities will have the opportunity to learn 21st Century skills like computer science.

These investments in our future are possible because over the last seven years – even in the throes of the Great Recession – we kept our fiscal house in order and made smart decisions about our priorities, like education.

Because we did, the budget I present tonight invests \$400 million more in the K-12 foundation formula than when I became Governor.

Funding is an essential part of the equation for successful schools. So is the drive to succeed.

Tonight we are joined by Dr. Scott Spurgeon, superintendent of the Riverview Gardens School District in St. Louis County, and some of Riverview's outstanding high school seniors.

The district includes areas of high crime, poverty and unemployment. Like so many urban school districts, that combination can create tough challenges for teachers, students and families. But under Dr. Spurgeon's dynamic leadership, the district has rallied.

Dr. Spurgeon played some serious baseball as a young man. He knows what it takes to compete and to win.

So it shouldn't come as a surprise that Riverview was the most improved school district in the state last year, and continues to make dramatic progress. You want to see what relentless focus and hard work can do?



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Meet the outstanding, college-bound students here with us tonight – Cameron Johnson, Darius Bass, Cordell Billups, Kristofer Grant, Devyn Walton and Shannon Washington.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Spurgeon and these talented young people.

In 2009, too many kids couldn't afford college – and those who did get a degree were saddled with too much debt.

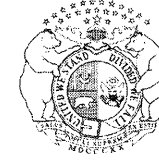
But today, more kids are going to college, getting their degrees – all while taking on far less debt than the national average. We're talking thousands of dollars less.

In fact, Missouri is number one in the nation in holding down tuition increases at our four-year institutions. It's nice to be number one.

This year, we will strengthen Missouri's position as a leader in college affordability and quality.

First, my budget includes an additional \$56 million in performance funding. And with this historic investment, our public colleges and universities will once again freeze tuition for Missouri undergraduates this fall. They won't pay a penny more.

We're also upping our investment in Missouri's A+ scholarship program to keep up with increasing demand. When I took office, fewer than half the schools in the state were A+, but today nearly all of them are – because I believed every student deserved an opportunity to earn an A+ scholarship.



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For low-income families, we're putting more money in Access Scholarships – reducing the cost of college for tens of thousands of students.

By focusing on affordability and demanding quality, we've driven a surge in college completion. Last year, more than 50,000 students earned a degree from one of our public institutions – up 36 percent since I took office.

Thirty-six percent. That's a big number – and a lot of proud parents.

My budget provides more resources to train even more Missourians for careers in high-demand health care fields.

And thanks to people in this room and our AAA credit rating, there are construction projects underway right now on campuses across the state: an engineering building at Mizzou, chemistry and biology labs at UMKC and Missouri S&T, renovations at Baldwin Hall at Truman, 19 new labs at St. Louis Community College... and the list goes on.

The best way to secure our future is by investing in the people who will lead it – the next generation. We're making a difference. Let's keep it up.

Let's also work together to protect kids and consumers by reining in the billion-dollar daily fantasy sports industry.

Let's get real: this is gambling, kids are playing, and it's completely unregulated. And there are lobbyists in this building who want to keep it that way. If you're going to legalize it, we must regulate it and tax it just like we do casinos.

This industry should follow the law, play by the rules, and pay its fair share. This could mean millions of dollars a year for education.



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I spoke earlier about the children with special needs at my elementary school, who were made fun of on the playground because they were different. Doing more for children like them has been a passion of mine ever since.

When I took office, insurance companies didn't cover therapy for thousands of Missouri kids with autism. Today, thousands of children are receiving life-changing therapy because we worked together and passed landmark autism legislation.

And with increased funding in my budget, we will build a new autism center at Truman State University, expand the Thompson Center for Autism in Columbia, and increase services at Mercy Kids Autism Center in St. Louis. That means more research, more treatment, better training and healthier kids.

When I took office, Missourians with developmental disabilities had to wait years for in-home Medicaid services. Today, there is no waiting list. Zero.

Under my budget, it will stay at zero – and we'll provide additional resources to those who care for Missourians with developmental disabilities.

We also need to reach out to those Missourians with severe mental illness.

When I took office, some of these people were locked up in a dangerous and decrepit facility in Fulton, first opened in 1851. It will soon be replaced by a state-of-the-art psychiatric hospital dedicated to modern treatment, rehabilitation and research.



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Too often Missourians with severe mental illness can't afford the treatment they need. And so they bounce in and out of our jails and emergency rooms – and back out onto the streets. It's expensive, counterproductive and no way for anyone to live.

My budget includes \$1.6 million to get those folks out of our emergency rooms, off the streets, and into treatment.

Today, in every county in the state, mental health professionals are partnering with local law enforcement to help those suffering from chronic mental illness find treatment and stability.

But our work is not finished.

Our goal is to help more individuals get into treatment earlier, before they reach a crisis point.

That's why this year we will roll out a crisis prevention program for Missourians between the ages of 21 and 35 with serious mental illness and substance abuse problems.

And while we're at it, Missouri needs to join the other 49 states in the nation, get a prescription drug monitoring program, and start to get a handle on the epidemic of opiate abuse.

In total, my budget includes an increase of nearly \$200 million for services to help Missourians with developmental disabilities and mental illness.

These programs change lives. They save lives. We can work together to make our communities safer, healthier and stronger.



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We also need to provide quality care for our proud veterans, including thousands of men and women who served in Vietnam. Last year, I signed legislation to provide \$33 million in improvements to our veterans' homes.

But we can do more. My budget includes funds for the design of a new veterans home, so that no veteran has to languish on a waiting list.

They did their duty — let's do ours.

There's a lot of rhetoric in politics today about helping working families. How about helping them get health care?

Right now we've got a backward system in our state. It encourages folks to sit at home and not work, and punishes working Missourians with jobs that don't offer health insurance.

More than 30 states already have expanded Medicaid, including ten with Republican legislatures.

This should be the year that we find a way forward, with a Missouri solution that rewards work, demands personal responsibility, brings our tax dollars home, and gives health care to 300,000 working Missourians.

Make no mistake — inaction has real consequences. It's time to stop playing politics with people's lives. Do the right thing and give them access to health care.

The fifth goal I set when I took office was ethics reform. Missouri's ethics laws are a disgrace — the weakest in the nation.



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The people of Missouri are nobody's fools. They understand that a donor who writes you a fat check expects something in return.

They know that if a lobbyist showers you with gifts, or takes you to the country club for cocktails and the surf-and-turf, he's going to lean on you before dessert.

They know it's wrong for legislators to launder campaign contributions by paying each other for political advice. Missouri has got to clean up its act.

I want to thank Speaker Richardson for pushing forward on this issue. But we're a long way from the finish line. Let's come together, restore the public's trust and pass real ethics reform now.

Before I close, I'd like to introduce you to a family that demonstrates the kind of difference we can make when we work together.

Paul and Jennifer Johnson are originally from Indiana. Paul was an electrician at the GM plant in Kokomo, and Jennifer was a stay-at-home mom. But in Indiana, GM was downsizing and Paul got laid off. He had just drawn his last unemployment check when he got an offer to work at the GM plant here in Missouri. He jumped at the chance.

Six months later, Jennifer got a job at the plant as well. Now they're both building next-generation vehicles here in the Show-Me State.

They like living in Wentzville so much that they convinced their daughter and her two kids to move nearby. Jennifer says the school district is awesome.



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But the biggest upside of their move is how well their grandson, Tristan, is doing. Tristan has autism. Before their move to Missouri, he was nonverbal. But with the help of therapy, he's now speaking – and thriving. Jennifer says it's had a huge impact on their family.

Paul and Jennifer are here with us tonight and I want to thank them for reminding us what Missouri is all about. We work hard. We build things. We care for people who need it. And we welcome everyone.

In the past three decades, I've learned a great deal from the people I've had the privilege to serve.

I've learned that Missourians are stronger, more resilient and more generous than you could ever imagine.

I've learned that Missouri's rich diversity is not a weakness – it's a strength.

I've learned that Missourians never shy away from a challenge. We listen, we learn and we get better.

I've also learned that there's a big difference between politics and public service.

Politics is a horse race, but the stakes are much higher than winning the election. The real prize is the opportunity to make life better – for people you don't know and may never meet.

And I am profoundly grateful that the people of Missouri have given me that high honor.



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My mom taught kids with developmental disabilities. She worked hard at a job she loved, cared deeply for others, and always stood up for what she knew was right.

She passed away before I became a state senator. But I am still trying to live up to her expectations and ideals – that we have an obligation to serve all Missourians: young and old, rich and poor, black and white, gay and straight, new arrivals and native sons.

And when we work together – guided by our shared values – and focus on the right things, we can make a lasting difference.

When I started in this job, Missouri was staring down the barrel of a crisis – unemployment was skyrocketing, factories were closing, and people were losing their homes and cars.

Some of you were here then – Senator Walsh, Senator Wasson, Representative Engler – you remember: it was rough.

We were getting WARN notices practically every day about layoffs.

But we had a plan. We stuck to it.

And we delivered: a hundred thousand new jobs; a balanced budget every year without higher taxes; better schools and affordable college; and healthier kids.

Do we have more work to do? Of course.

But look where we are now: 4.4 percent unemployment, personal income and GDP on the rise, number one in new business creation, AAA credit rating intact.



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I appreciate those of you in this room who put progress before partisanship to move our state forward.

But as always, the real credit belongs to the people of Missouri.

Together, Missourians of every generation have worked hard to build a brighter future.

Our enduring values have guided us through good times and bad.

And because I share those values, I am optimistic about our future – optimistic that the people of Missouri will prevail in the face of every challenge, and enjoy the blessings of freedom, equality and prosperity for years to come.

Let's use the brief time that remains to each of us, to work together and leave Missouri better than we found it.

God willing, it will be.

Thank you and God bless.